## Katherine "Kaki" Willrich

by Parker Willmon, Biomedical Engineering/ Mathematics Junior

Kaki Wilrich is no typical senior. She is a 38-year-old student with two daughters and a husband. Not only that, but she is also active in the community. She teaches an adult education program at Rolling Hills Ministries and has volunteered with everything from truancy programs to domestic abuse shelters. She even cooks as a hobby and goes to lunch weekly with a widow from her church. Despite this full schedule, she still managed to maintain a 4.0 grade-point average while studying mathematics. When asked how she manages to balance her family life, volunteer work and school, Kaki said it is a bit of a balancing act, but it comes down to her family being supportive and calculus homework being scribbled on the back of recipe cards.

Kaki plans on earning a Ph.D. in Mathematics here at Tech after she graduates. With a Ph.D. in hand, she hopes to teach at a university and do STEM education research. Originally, Kaki did poorly in math but was always interested in the field. Because of this, she hopes to teach introductory math classes and early calculus classes to show students that math is fascinating and that it is not an obstacle between the pupil and their degree.

Kaki gave two major pieces of advice for younger students. The first was "if it's not your timing to be in college, you can still come back again. Don't give up. You get more focused as you get older." Her second piece of advice is for everyone and comes from watching her daughters. "I think if we can remember to never ever give up, to always pick ourselves up and keep going, and always have enough faith to try things that we could never do by ourselves in the first place, then there's no limit to the things that we can do and accomplish."

## Ryan Botts

by Erik Romero, Cyber Engineering Freshman

Four years ago, Louisiana Tech welcomed Ryan Botts onto its campus. Since then, Ryan has distinguished himself through the development of new student organizations, his knack for innovation and design, and as the graphics editor with E&S Magazine. Before landing in Ruston for his studies, Ryan spent most of his life overseas. He lived in Panama, Japan, Iceland, England and Hawaii. When asked what influenced his choice of Louisiana Tech as his college, he answered that the "engineering program was recognized as a [top] performer." He also enjoyed the small town feel that Ruston offers. Initially a mechanical engineering student, Ryan switched to industrial engineering and graduated in the Fall of 2018.

Ryan was a member of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) organization and Operations Tech where he helped students develop new skills in prototyping and problem-solving. He founded the latter two years ago during his sophomore year with the intention of improving life on Louisiana Tech's campus. While Ryan spends a large amount of time helping in a variety of organizations, he also enjoys photography, which is the main reason he enjoys traveling during summers. Most importantly though, he plans to continue studying to get a master's and a doctoral degree in industrial design.

The biggest advice Ryan has to incoming freshman is to ask themselves: "What is your mission in life; the 'why' behind everything you are doing?" If you don't know the answer, don't be afraid to explore because "you don't have to know exactly what your mission is, but you probably have an idea of what it might be. Explore that and make sure that by the time you leave Tech you've developed the understanding of your mission so that you can contribute to society to your fullest potential."

Between changing the game of innovation on campus and being an amazing graphics editor, Louisiana Tech and the E&S Magazine are grateful to have been able to share the past four years with Ryan.